

GANGA

THE DIVINE BEAUTY

Vol 515 | Rs 35



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Script
Lakshmi Seshadri

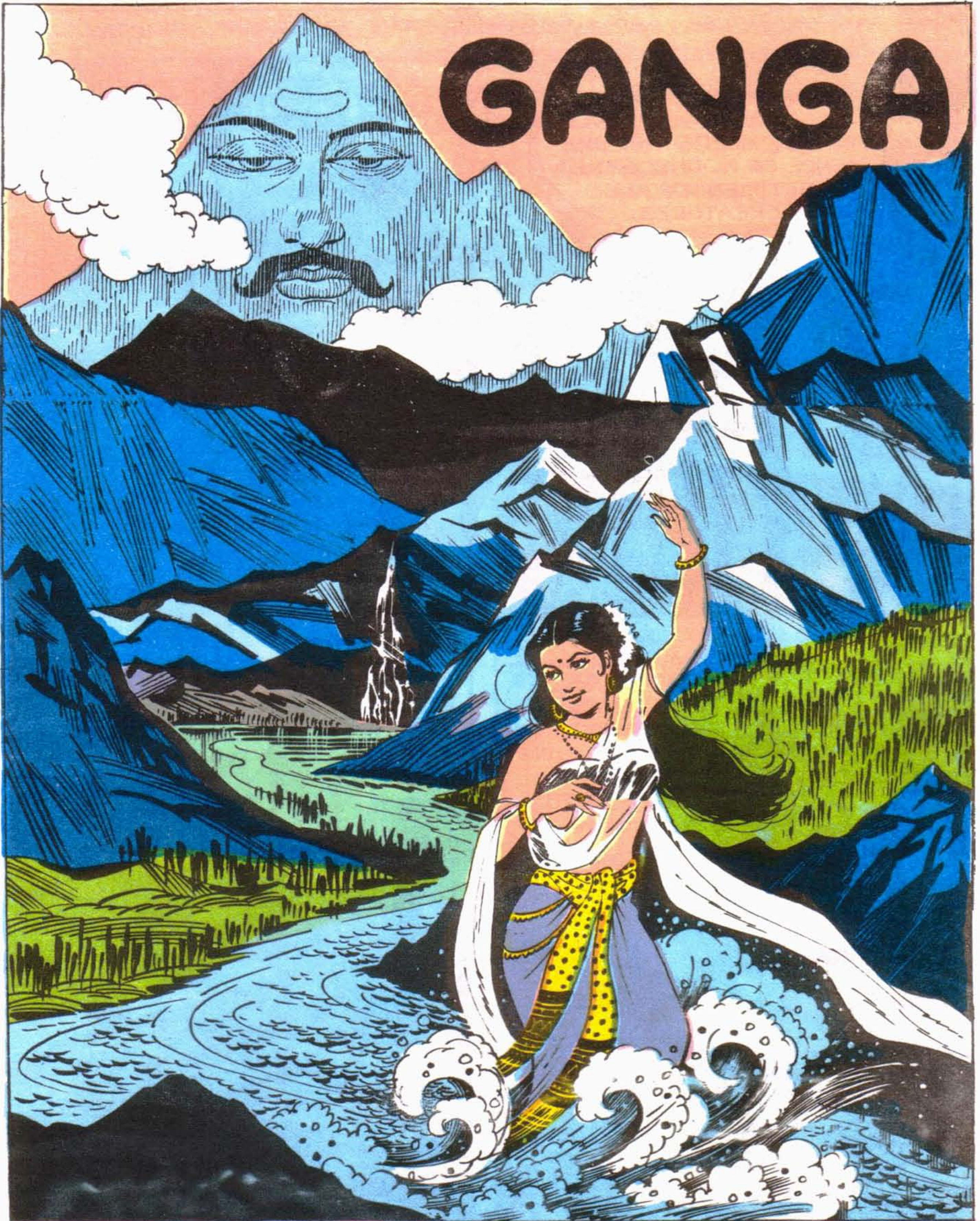
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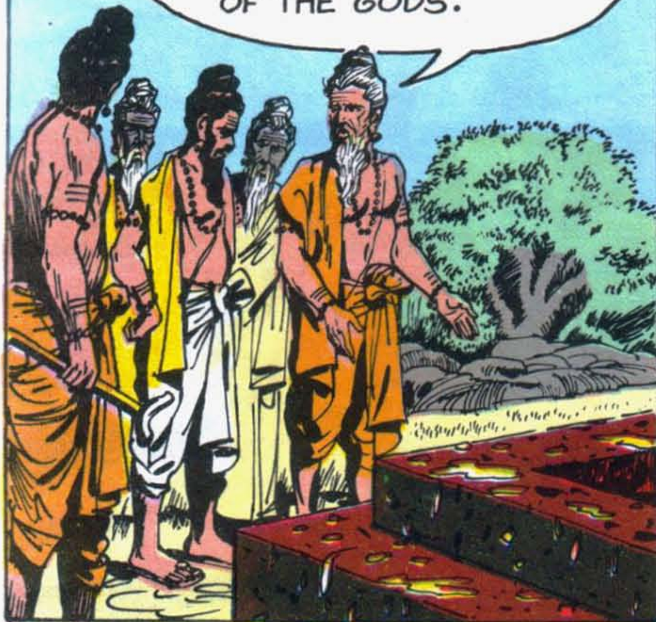
BEAUTIFUL, PURE, STRONG-WILLED GANGA WAS THE ELDER DAUGHTER OF MOUNT HIMAVAN. SHE HAD THE POWER OF PURIFYING ANYTHING THAT TOUCHED HER.


ONE DAY, THE DEVAS, LED BY BRAHMA, CAME TO MOUNT HIMAVAN.
HEAVEN NEEDS THE PRESENCE OF YOUNG GANGA, SANCTIFIER OF ALL CREATURES.
IF GANGA GOES, THE EARTH WILL SUFFER. BUT IT IS MY DUTY TO LOOK TO THE GOOD OF ALL THE THREE WORLDS.


I AM WILLING TO SEND GANGA, WHO FLOWS EVERYWHERE AT WILL, PURIFYING ALL IN HER WAKE, WITH YOU.


MAY WE TAKE HER WITH US NOW?
GO WITH THE DEVAS, GANGA, AND SERVE THEM DUTIFULLY.

AT ABOUT THAT TIME, LIFE ON EARTH WAS BECOMING IMPOSSIBLE FOR ALL RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE.







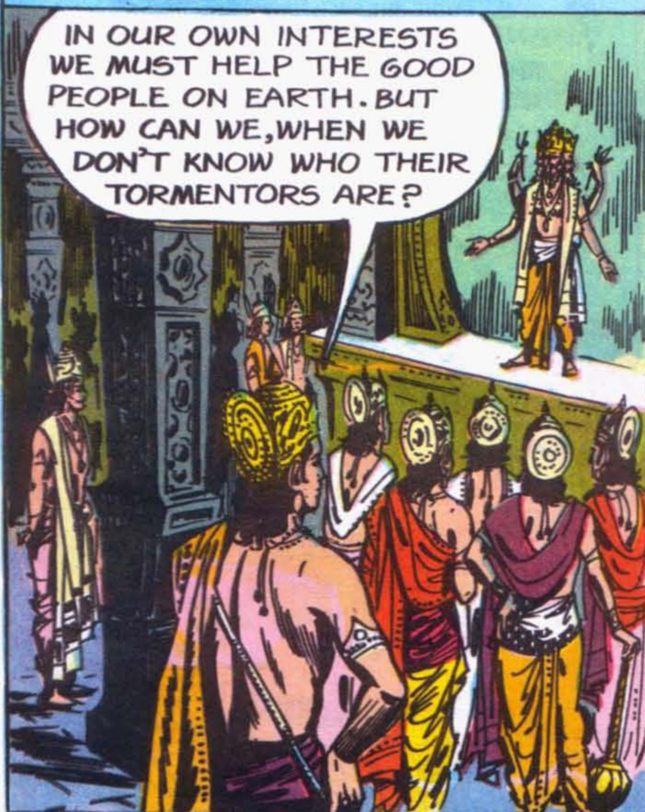
AT LAST –



THEIR MYSTERIOUS TORMENTORS WERE A GROUP OF ASURAS* WHO HID IN THE OCEAN BY DAY AND CAME OUT TO HARASS THEM AT NIGHT.



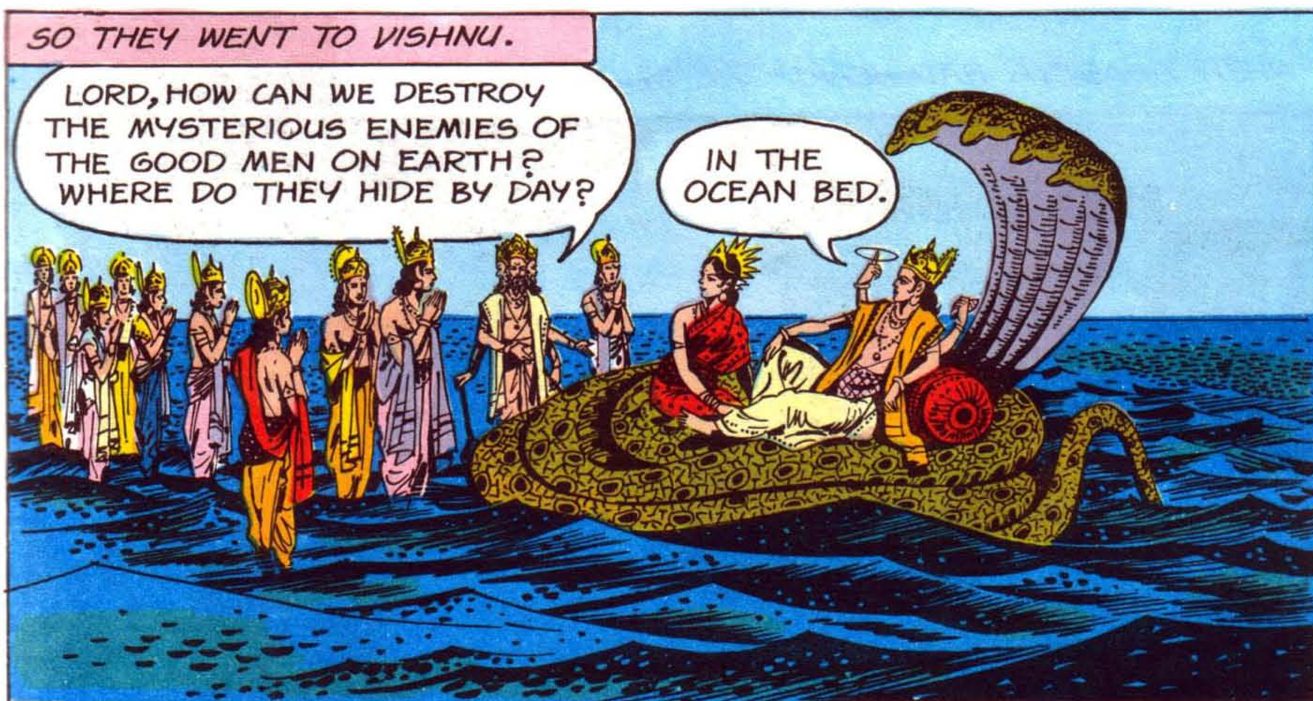
IN HEAVEN, THE DEVAS WERE PERTURBED BY THE PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE. THEY HELD COUNCIL.



BRAHMA MADE A SUGGESTION.

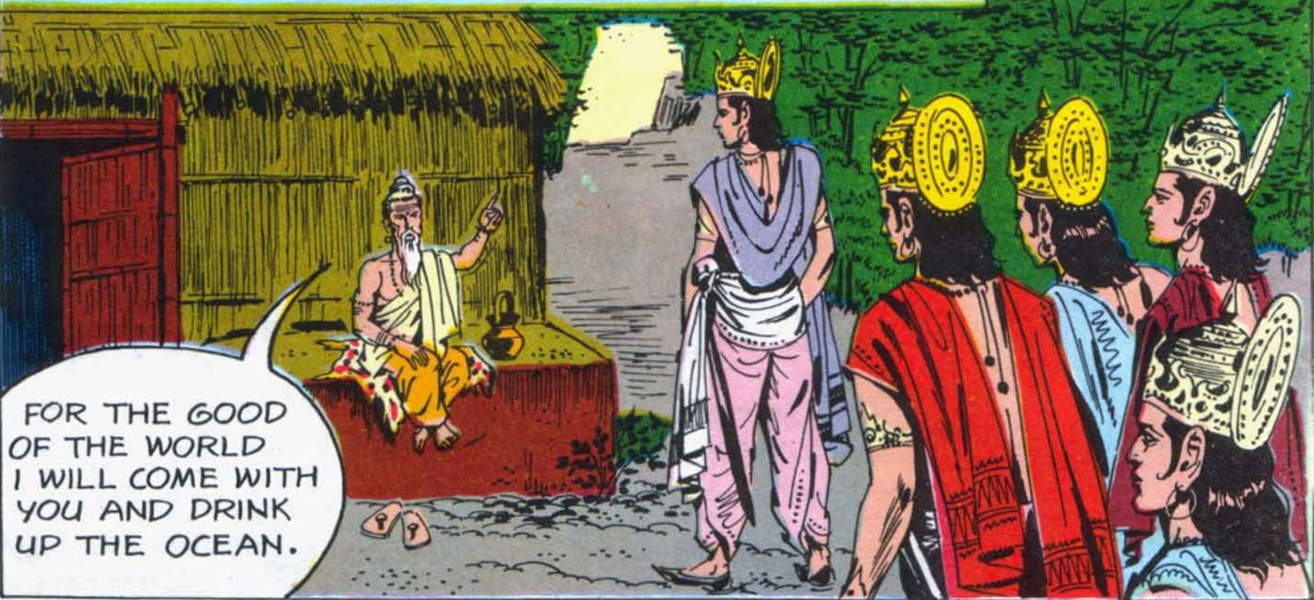


* A RACE CONSTANTLY AT WAR WITH THE SURAS OR DEVAS.


SO THEY WENT TO VISHNU.
LORD, HOW CAN WE DESTROY THE MYSTERIOUS ENEMIES OF THE GOOD MEN ON EARTH? WHERE DO THEY HIDE BY DAY?
IN THE OCEAN BED.


TO KILL THEM YOU WILL HAVE TO DRY UP THE OCEAN. GO TO SAGE AGASTYA. HE ALONE CAN HELP YOU.

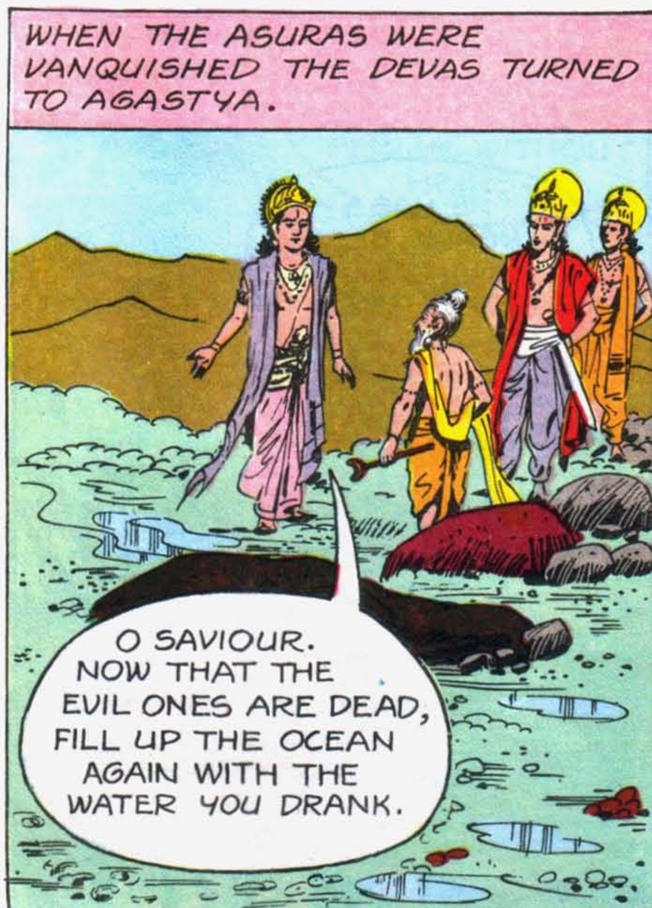

YOU MAY GO TO SAGE AGASTYA NOW AND DO WHAT IS TO BE DONE.

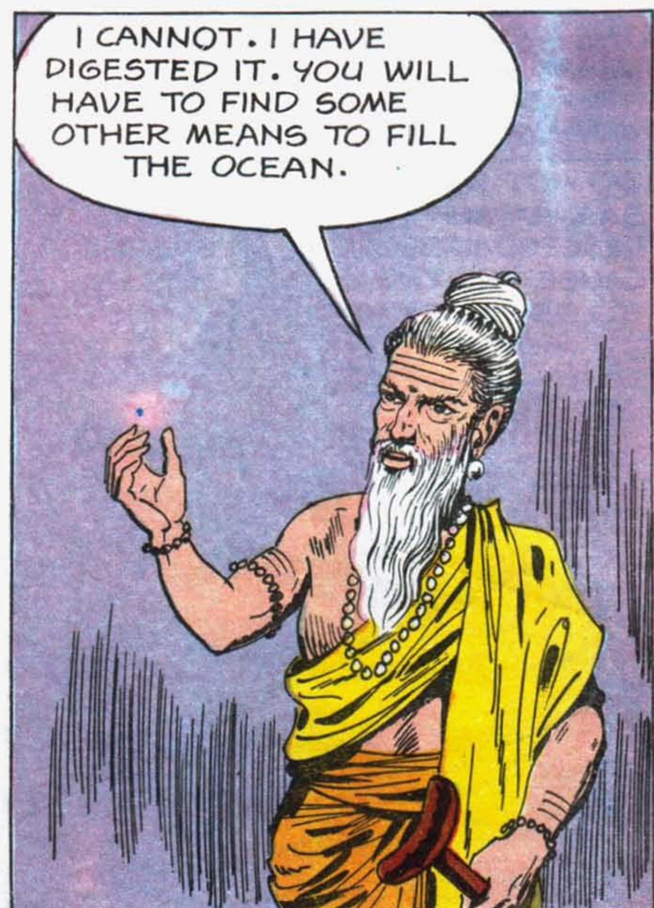

WHEN AGASTYA HAD HEARD THE WHOLE STORY -
FOR THE GOOD OF THE WORLD I WILL COME WITH YOU AND DRINK UP THE OCEAN.

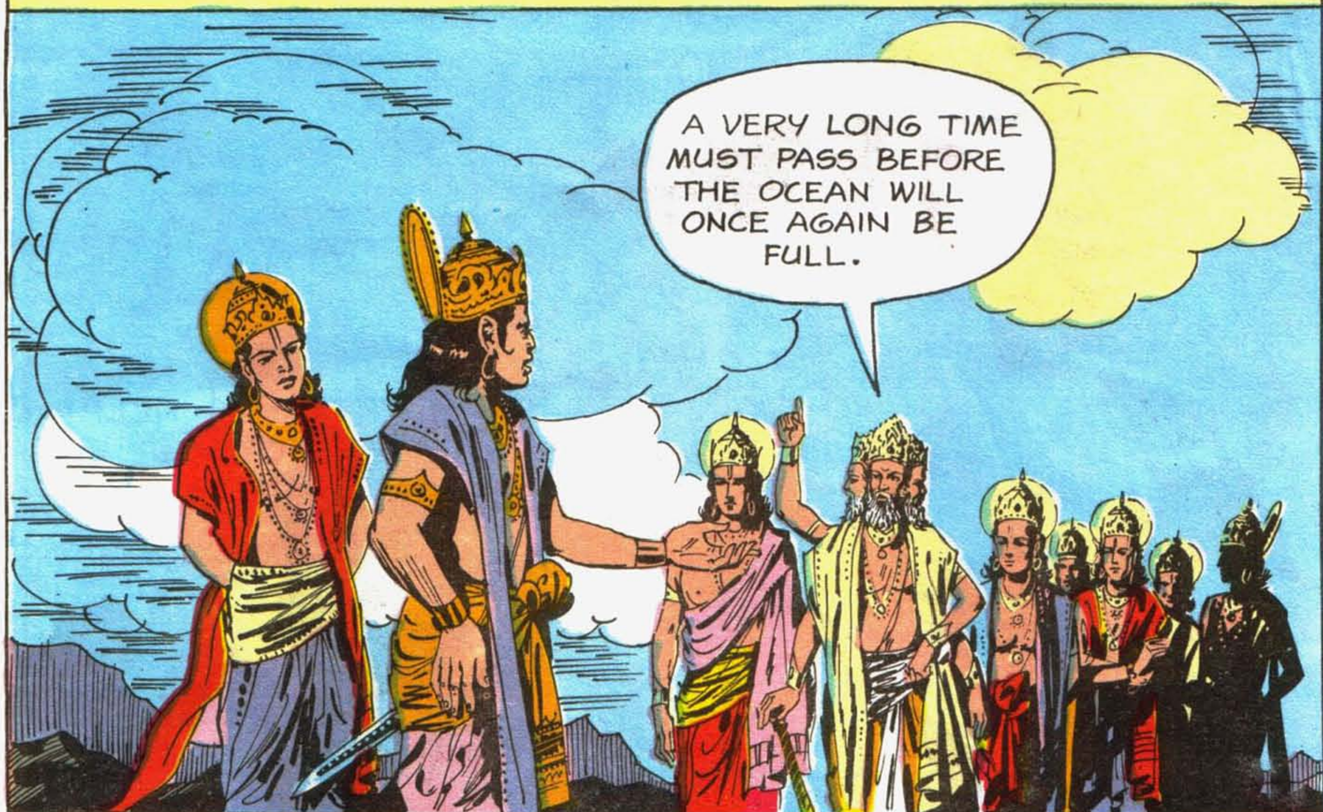

WHEN THEY REACHED THE OCEAN -
BE READY TO DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.


AS AGASTYA BENT DOWN AND BEGAN TO DRINK UP THE OCEAN, THE EVIL ASURAS WERE EXPOSED -

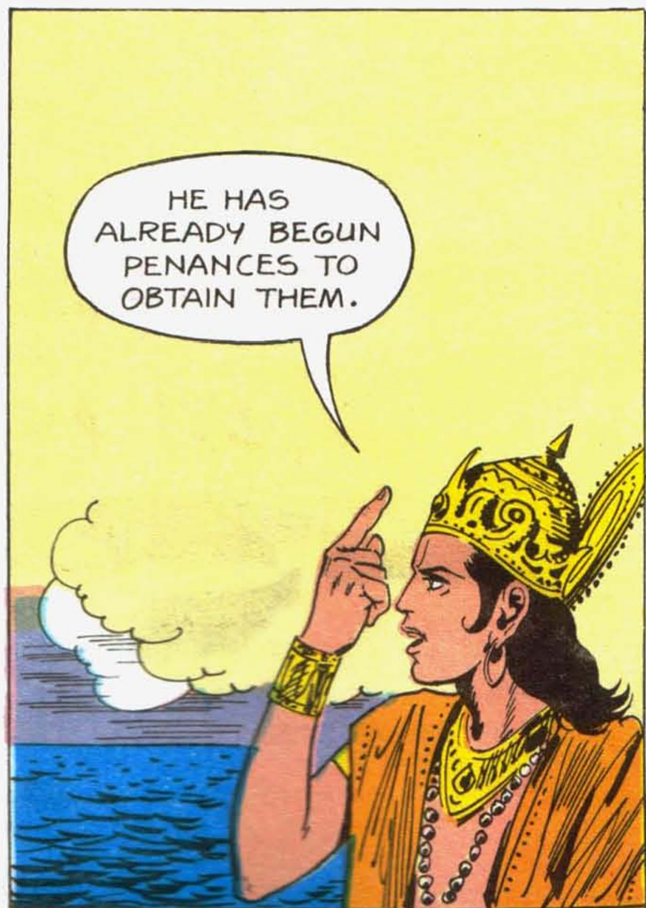

THE DEVAS FELL UPON THEM.
DON'T SPARE THE MURDERERS!
HELP! HELP!


WHEN THE ASURAS WERE VANQUISHED THE DEVAS TURNED TO AGASTYA.
O SAVIOUR. NOW THAT THE EVIL ONES ARE DEAD, FILL UP THE OCEAN AGAIN WITH THE WATER YOU DRANK.


I CANNOT. I HAVE DIGESTED IT. YOU WILL HAVE TO FIND SOME OTHER MEANS TO FILL THE OCEAN.


THE DEVAS DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO. THEY WENT TO BRAHMA.
A VERY LONG TIME MUST PASS BEFORE THE OCEAN WILL ONCE AGAIN BE FULL.

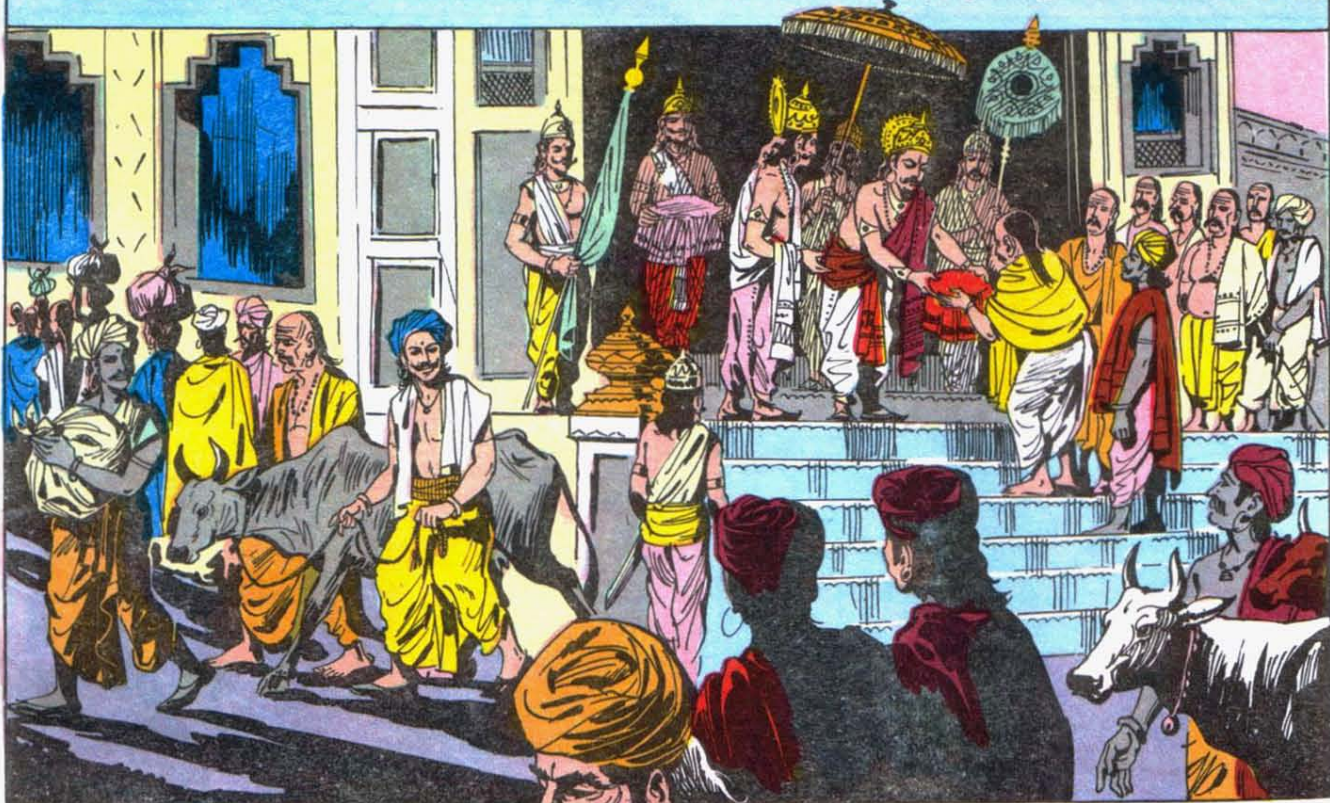

THE DEVAS WAITED A NUMBER OF YEARS AND STILL NOTHING HAPPENED. SO THEY WENT TO VISHNU AGAIN. THERE–
DO NOT WORRY. KING SAGARA AND HIS DESCENDANTS WILL CAUSE THE OCEAN TO BE FILLED UP AGAIN.
BUT SAGARA HAS NO SONS.


HE HAS ALREADY BEGUN PENANCES TO OBTAIN THEM.

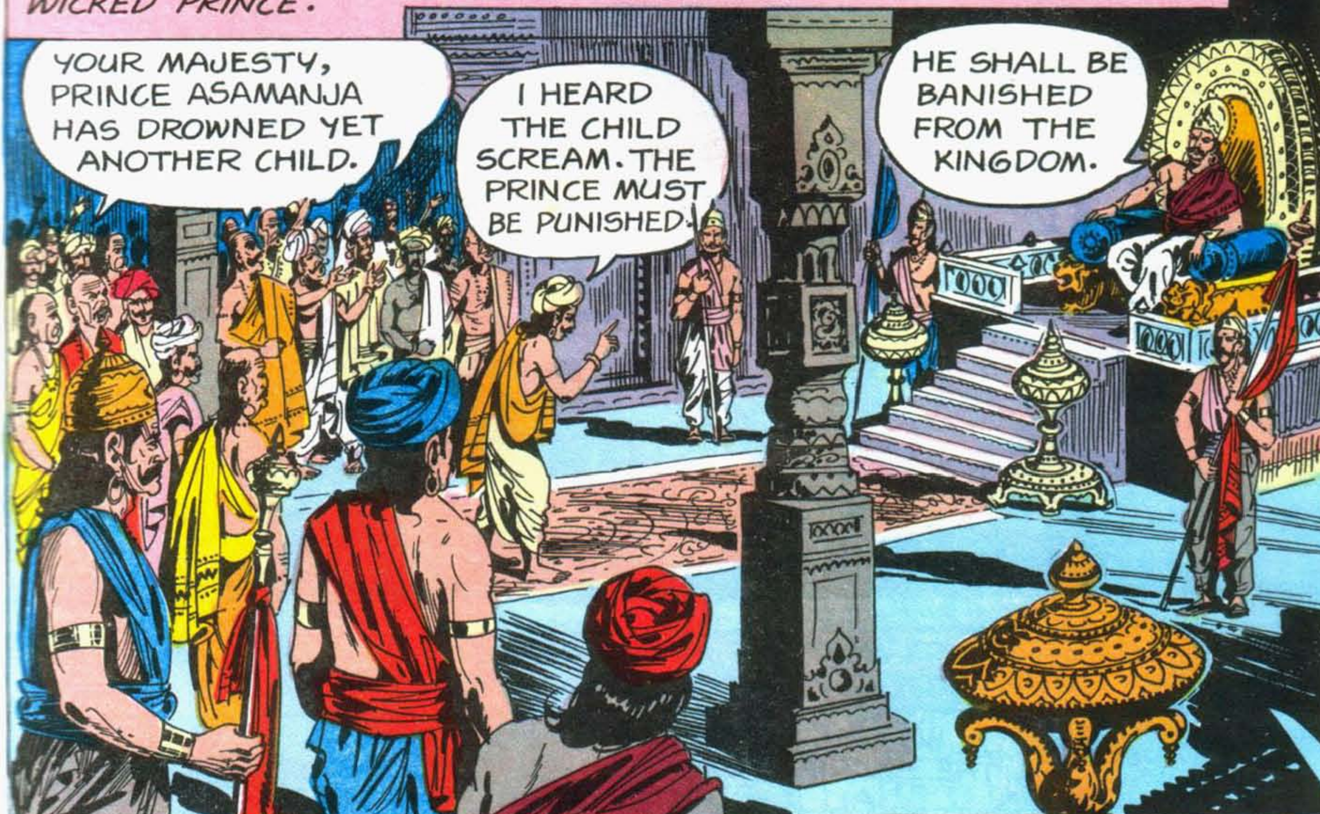

AT THAT MOMENT ON EARTH, LORD SHIVA APPEARED BEFORE KING SAGARA AND HIS QUEENS, KESHINI AND SUMATI.
I AM PLEASED WITH YOUR PIETY. YOU SHALL HAVE MANY SONS.

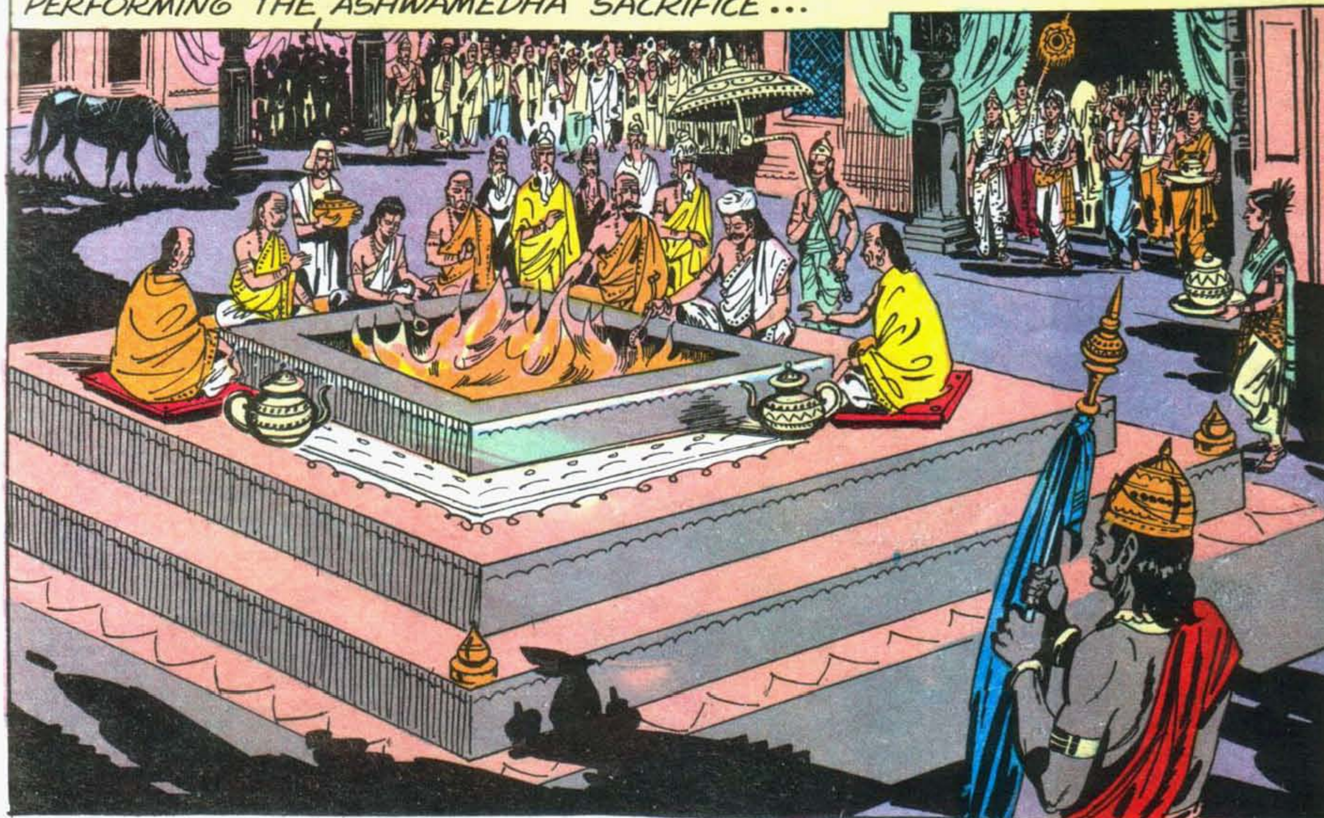

ONE OF YOUR WIVES SHALL BEAR 60,000 PROUD AND HEROIC SONS WHO WILL ALL PERISH WITHOUT HEIRS.


YOUR RACE HOWEVER WILL BE CONTINUED BY THE ONE SON THAT YOUR OTHER WIFE WILL BEAR.


ACCORDINGLY, IN COURSE OF TIME, BOTH WIVES BORE CHILDREN. KING SAGARA WAS OVERJOYED AND GAVE MANY GIFTS TO THE POOR.


DAYS PASSED AND THE BOYS GREW UP. THE 60,000 SONS OF SUMATI WERE BRAVE, STRONG LADS, WHO WERE CONSCIOUS OF THEIR ROYAL STATUS.
WE MUST LEARN TO WIELD A CHARIOT AND WIN A WAR. WE ARE THE SONS OF A KING.
WHERE ARE MY GOLDEN ARROWS? A PRINCE ON WHOM HIS PEOPLE DEPEND MUST HAVE THE BEST OF WEAPONS.

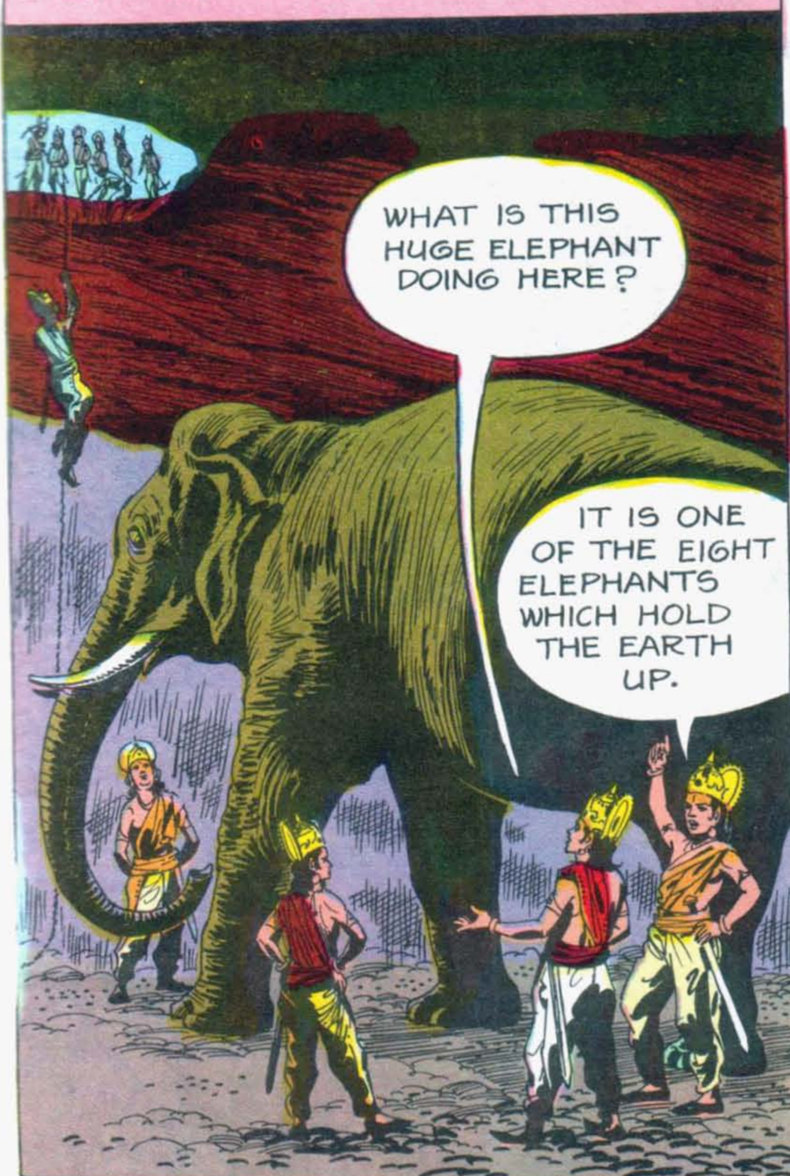

QUEEN KESHINI'S SON ASAMANJA, HOWEVER, GREW UP TO BE A WICKED PRINCE.
YOUR MAJESTY, PRINCE ASAMANJA HAS DROWNED YET ANOTHER CHILD.
I HEARD THE CHILD SCREAM. THE PRINCE MUST BE PUNISHED.
HE SHALL BE BANISHED FROM THE KINGDOM.


BUT ASAMANJA'S SON AMSUMAN WAS A VERY KIND AND CONSIDERATE BOY AND THE PEOPLE LOVED HIM. ONCE, WHEN KING SAGARA WAS PERFORMING THE ASHWAMEDHA SACRIFICE ...


... INDRA STOLE THE SACRIFICIAL HORSE.


WHEN THEY DISCOVERED THAT THE HORSE WAS STOLEN, THE OFFICIATING PRIEST AND SAGARA TURNED TO THE 60,000 PRINCES.
IF WE CAN'T COMPLETE THE SACRIFICE, WE ARE ALL DOOMED.
GO, MY VALIANT SONS! GO AND FIND THE HORSE.


THE SONS OF SAGARA SEARCHED THE WHOLE EARTH BUT COULD NOT FIND THE HORSE. AT LAST –
THERE IS ONLY ONE PLACE LEFT TO SEARCH – THE NETHER WORLD.
THEN LET US DIG OUR WAY THROUGH THE EARTH AND SEARCH THERE.







WHEN THE SAGARAS HAD DUG THE EARTH TO TUNNEL THEIR WAY TO THE NETHER WORLD, THE PANIC-STRICKEN INHABITANTS OF THE EARTH RAN HITHER AND THITHER. THE ELEPHANT TO MAINTAIN THE BALANCE OF THEIR WEIGHT, MOVED, CAUSING A TREMENDOUS EARTHQUAKE.



MEANWHILE, OBLIVIOUS OF THE HARM THAT THEY HAD DONE, THE SONS OF SAGARA MOVED ON AND CAME TO WHERE SAGE KAPILA SAT MEDITATING.



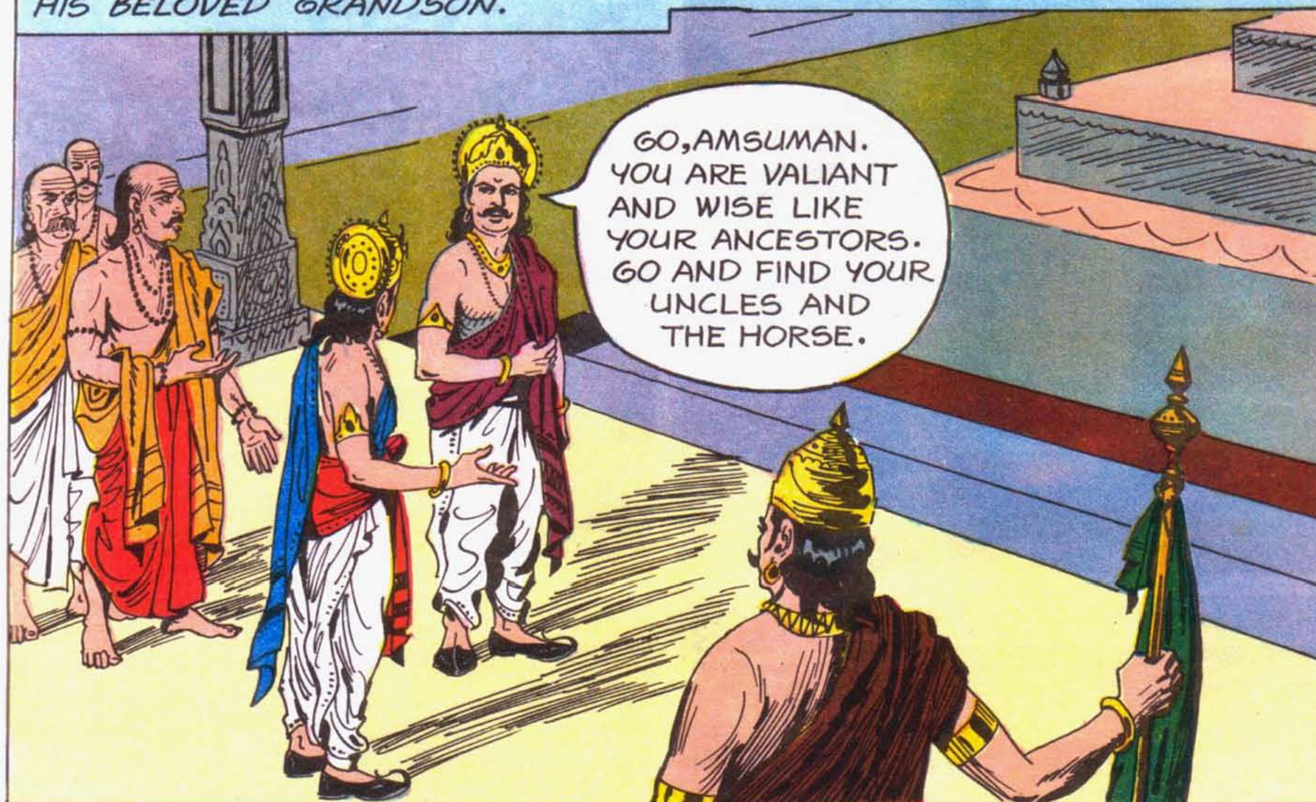


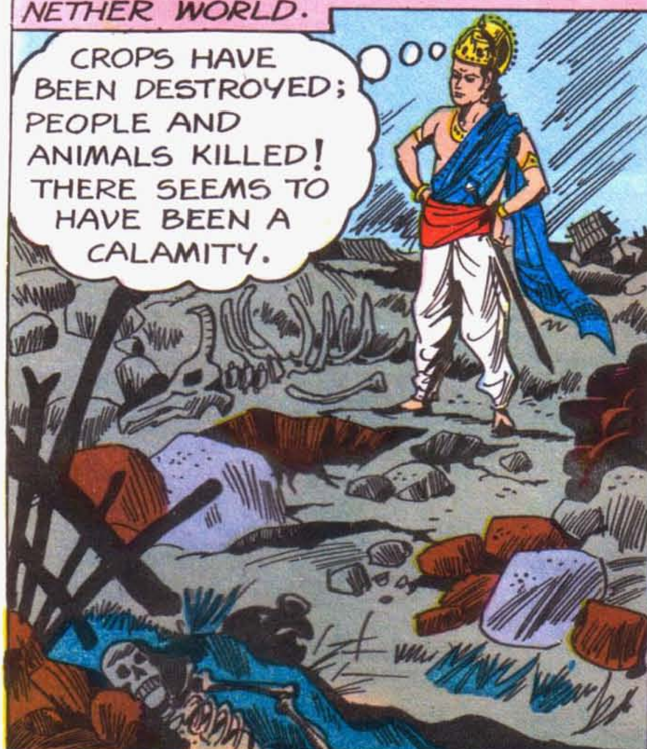
AS THE ENRAGED PRINCES WERE ABOUT TO ATTACK HIM –





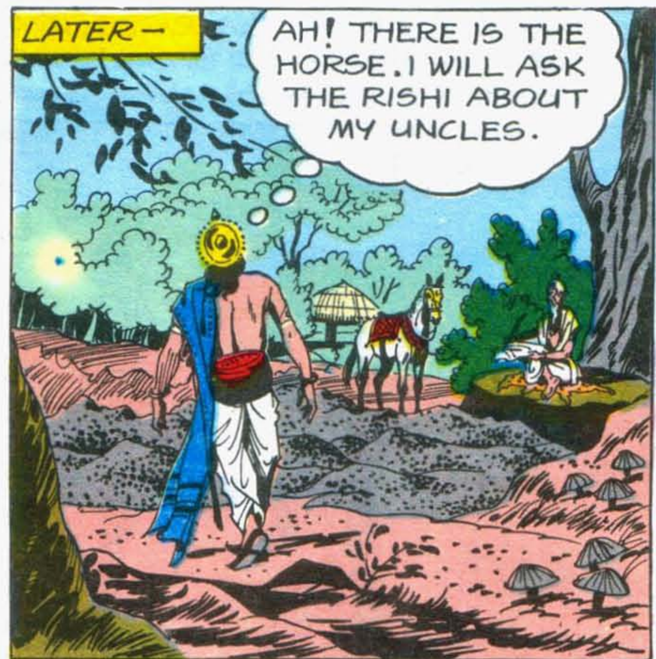
ANGERED BY THEIR AUDACITY, THE POWERFUL KAPILA BURNED THE 60,000 PRINCES TO ASHES BY UTTERING BUT ONE SYLLABLE.


MEANWHILE, AT THE SACRIFICE, WHEN THE PRINCES DID NOT RETURN, SAGARA REMEMBERED SHIVA'S WORDS. HE TURNED TO AMSUMAN, HIS BELOVED GRANDSON.
GO, AMSUMAN. YOU ARE VALIANT AND WISE LIKE YOUR ANCESTORS. GO AND FIND YOUR UNCLES AND THE HORSE.


AMSUMAN SET OUT AND SOON CAME UPON THE PLACE WHERE HIS UNCLES HAD ENTERED THE NETHER WORLD.
CROPS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED; PEOPLE AND ANIMALS KILLED! THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A CALAMITY.

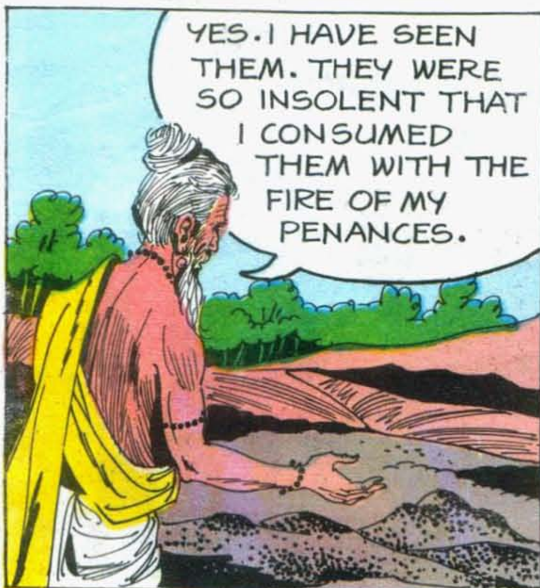

I WILL ENTER THIS CRATER. PERHAPS MY UNCLES ARE IN THE NETHER WORLD.

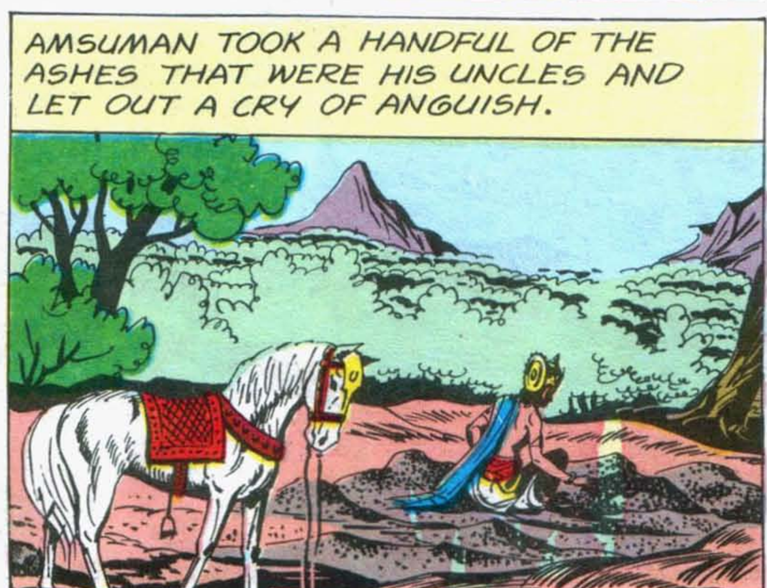

LIKE HIS UNCLES, HE TOO SAW THE ELEPHANT.
PROCEED! YOU WILL ACCOMPLISH WHAT YOU HAVE SET OUT TO.

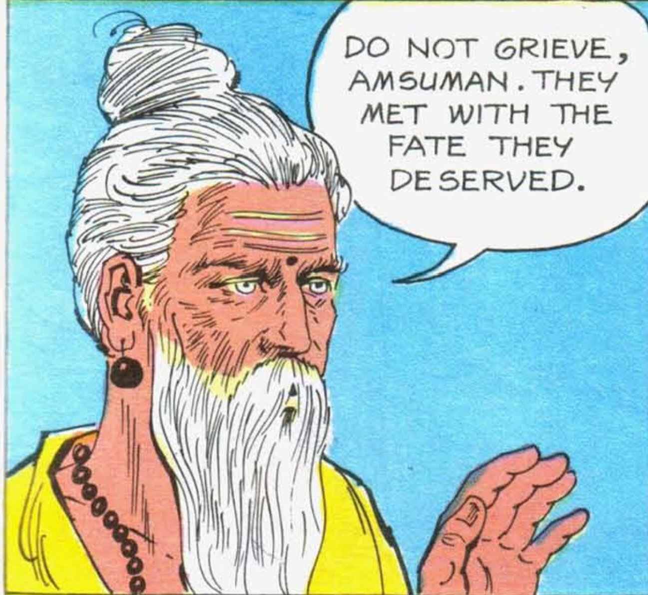

LATER –
AH! THERE IS THE HORSE. I WILL ASK THE RISHI ABOUT MY UNCLES.

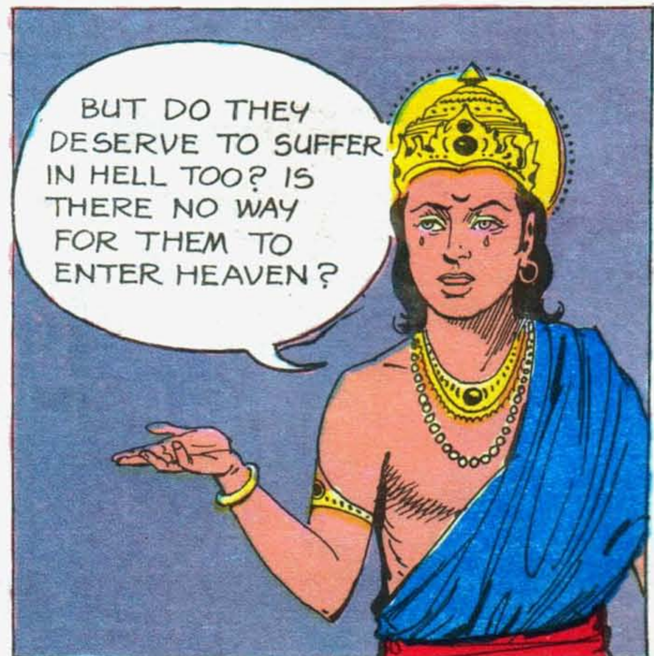

AMSUMAN CAME CLOSER...

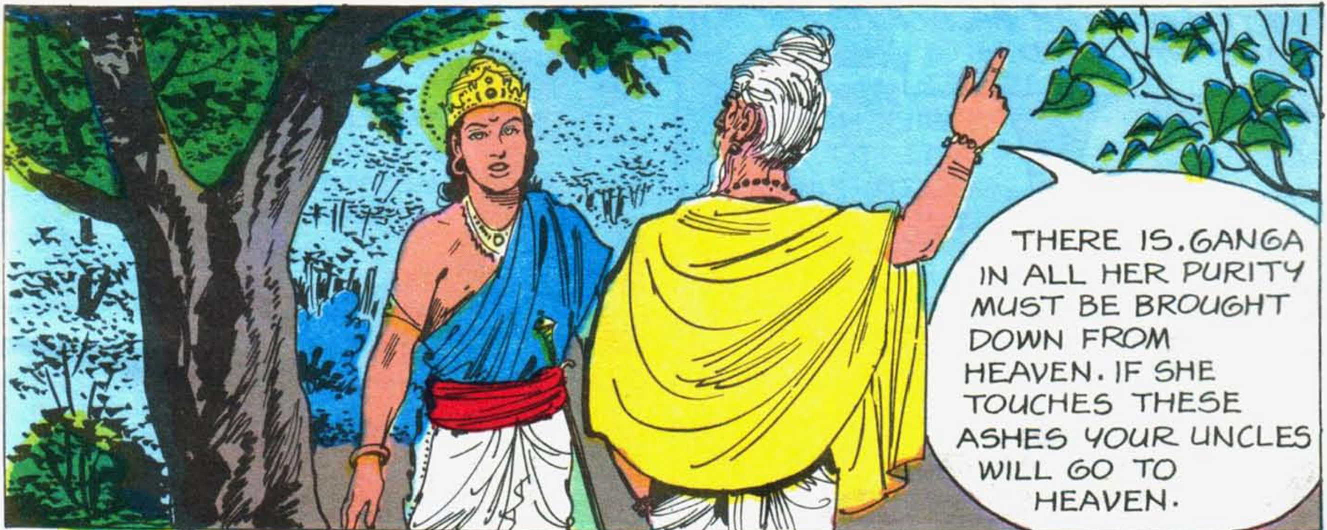

...AND SALUTED THE RISHI.
HAVE YOU SEEN MY UNCLES? THEY CAME AFTER THAT SACRIFICIAL HORSE.

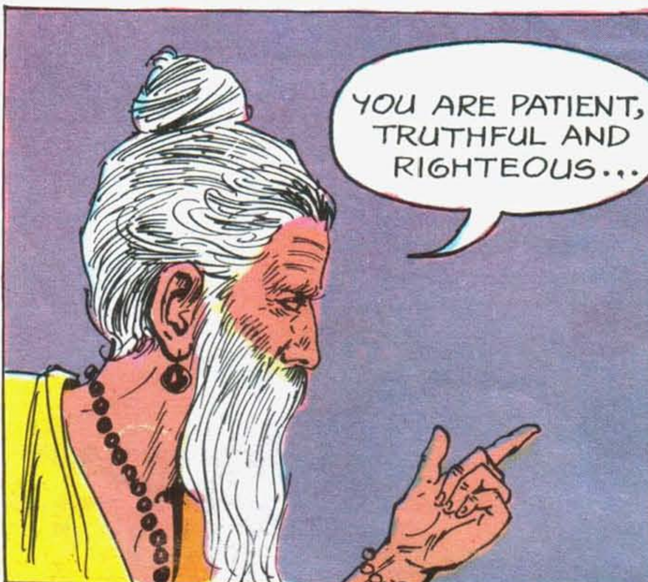

YES. I HAVE SEEN THEM. THEY WERE SO INSOLENT THAT I CONSUMED THEM WITH THE FIRE OF MY PENANCES.


AMSUMAN TOOK A HANDFUL OF THE ASHES THAT WERE HIS UNCLES AND LET OUT A CRY OF ANGUISH.


THE SAGE TRIED TO CONSOLE HIM.
DO NOT GRIEVE, AMSUMAN. THEY MET WITH THE FATE THEY DESERVED.

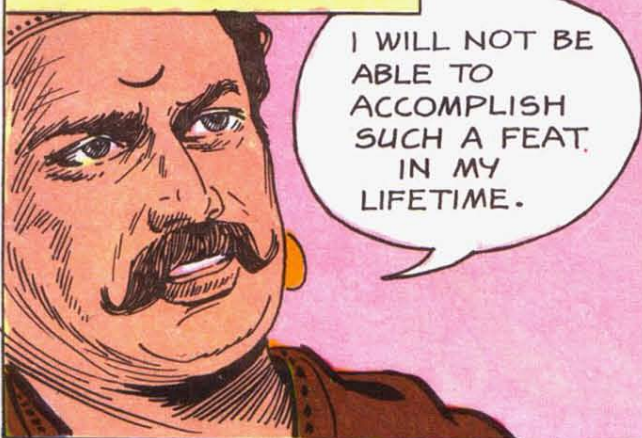

BUT DO THEY DESERVE TO SUFFER IN HELL TOO? IS THERE NO WAY FOR THEM TO ENTER HEAVEN?


THERE IS. GANGA IN ALL HER PURITY MUST BE BROUGHT DOWN FROM HEAVEN. IF SHE TOUCHES THESE ASHES YOUR UNCLES WILL GO TO HEAVEN.

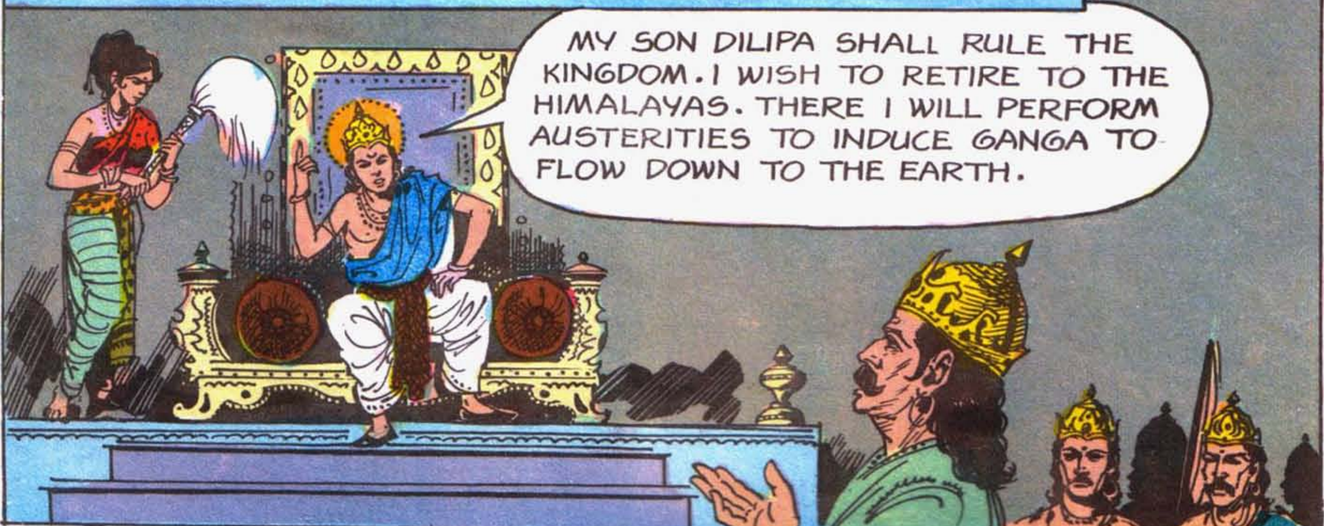

YOU ARE PATIENT, TRUTHFUL AND RIGHTEOUS...


...YOU MAY TAKE THE SACRIFICIAL HORSE BACK WITH YOU.


AMSUMAN RETURNED WITH THE HORSE.
WE ARE SAVED. THE SACRIFICIAL HORSE HAS BEEN FOUND.
THE SACRIFICE CAN NOW BE COMPLETED.

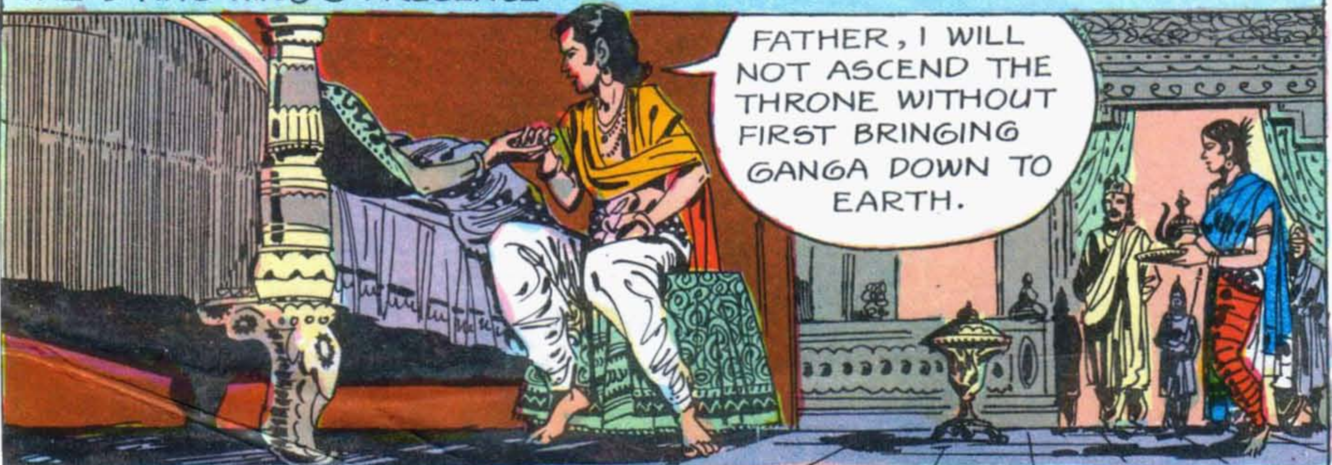

LATER, AT THE PALACE, WHEN AMSUMAN TOLD SAGARA WHAT THE SAGE HAD SAID –
I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH SUCH A FEAT IN MY LIFETIME.


AMSUMAN, YOU MUST BECOME KING AFTER ME AND STRIVE TO BRING GANGA TO EARTH.


WHEN SAGARA DIED, AMSUMAN BECAME KING. BUT –
MY SON DILIPA SHALL RULE THE KINGDOM. I WISH TO RETIRE TO THE HIMALAYAS. THERE I WILL PERFORM AUSTERITIES TO INDUCE GANGA TO FLOW DOWN TO THE EARTH.


AMSUMAN HOWEVER DIED WITHOUT SUCCEEDING IN HIS ATTEMPTS. HIS SON DILIPA WAS OVERCOME BY GRIEF.
I MUST BRING GANGA TO EARTH IN MY REIGN.


DAY AND NIGHT HE THOUGHT ABOUT THE FATE OF HIS ANCESTORS AND HOW HE MIGHT REDEEM THEIR SOULS. BUT—
I HAVE BEEN KING FOR MANY YEARS. STILL I HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED IN BRINGING GANGA TO EARTH.


AT LAST EVEN DILIPA WAS ON HIS DEATHBED, LEAVING THE TASK UNACCOMPLISHED. HIS SON BHAGIRATHA, HOWEVER, MADE A VOW IN THE DYING KING'S PRESENCE.
FATHER, I WILL NOT ASCEND THE THRONE WITHOUT FIRST BRINGING GANGA DOWN TO EARTH.


ACCORDINGLY, WHEN DILIPA DIED, BHAGIRATHA ADDRESSED THE MINISTERS.
I WILL BE KING ONLY AFTER GANGA FLOWS ON EARTH. I ENTRUST THE KINGDOM TO YOU.


I AM LEAVING FOR THE FOREST WHERE I WILL UNDERGO THE MOST SEVERE PENANCES.


FOR YEARS BHAGIRATHA CONTINUED HIS PENANCES AND MEDITATION.

AT LAST, PLEASED BY HIS SINGLE-MINDEDNESS, BRAHMA APPEARED BEFORE HIM.

ASK FOR A BOON, O STEADFAST ONE, AND IT SHALL BE GRANTED TO YOU.

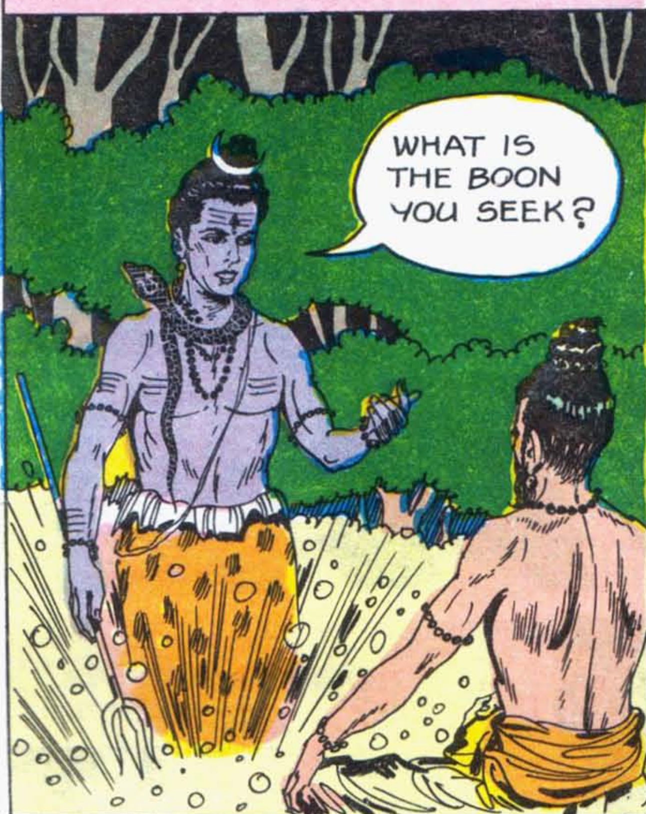
THEN LET GANGA FLOW DOWN TO EARTH FROM THE HEAVEN AND DELIVER THE SOULS OF MY ANCESTORS.

YOUR AIM IS A LOFTY ONE. BUT THE EARTH CANNOT SUSTAIN THE FORCE OF HER FALL. ONLY SHIVA CAN WITHSTAND IT.

AND BRAHMA DISAPPEARED.

THEN I SHALL PERFORM PENANCES TO PLEASE SHIVA.

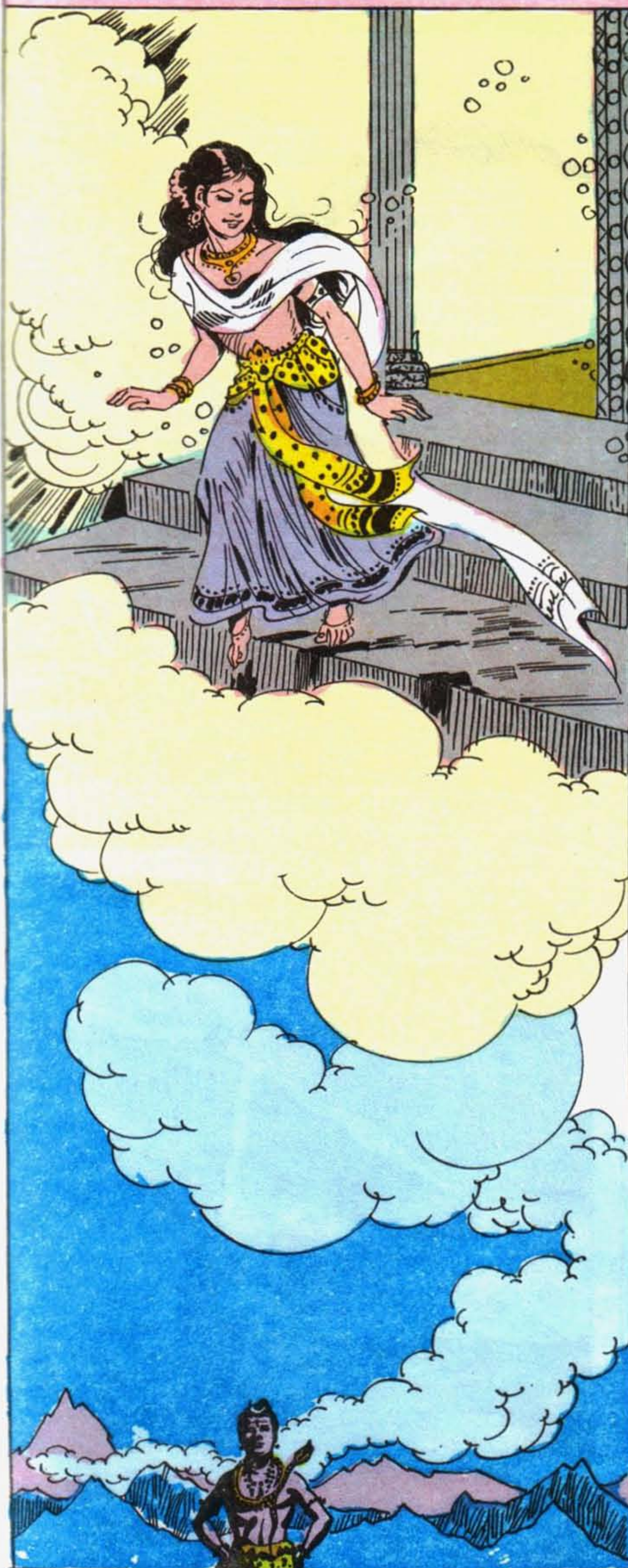
FOR A YEAR BHAGIRATHA ADORED SHIVA.

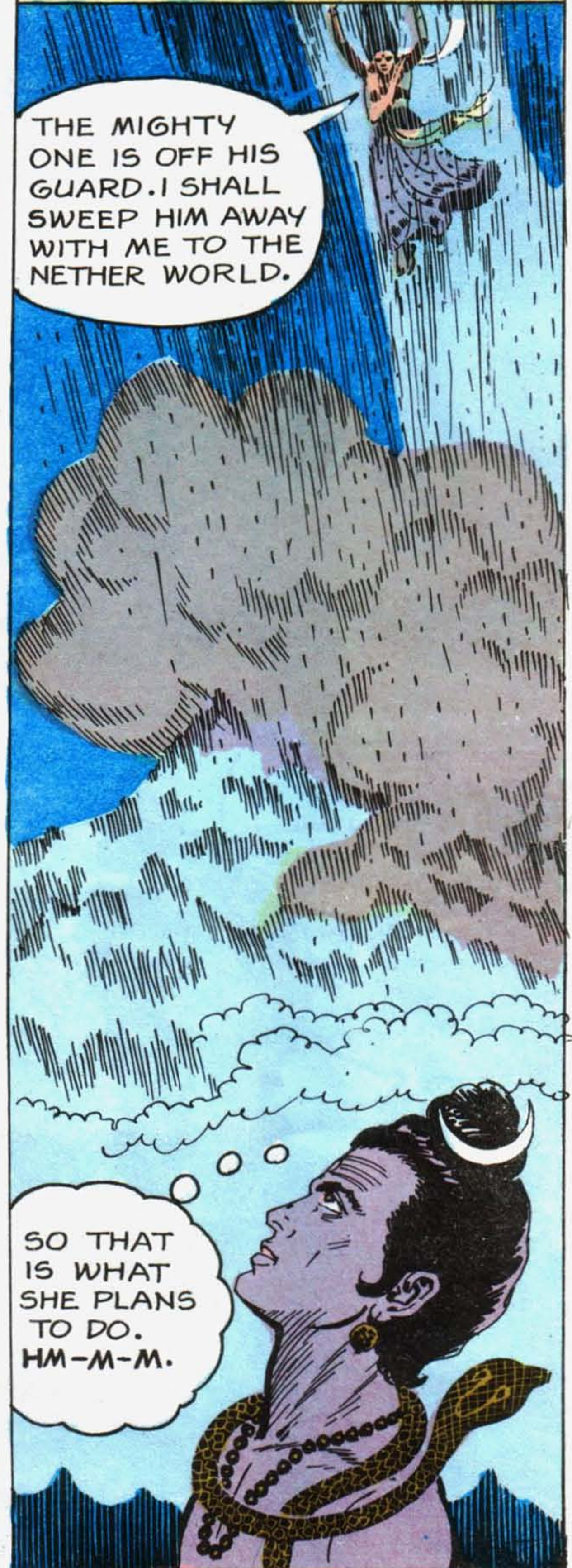

SHIVA APPEARED BEFORE HIM.
WHAT IS THE BOON YOU SEEK?


LORD, PLEASE RECEIVE THE FORCE OF GANGA AS SHE DESCENDS TO EARTH.

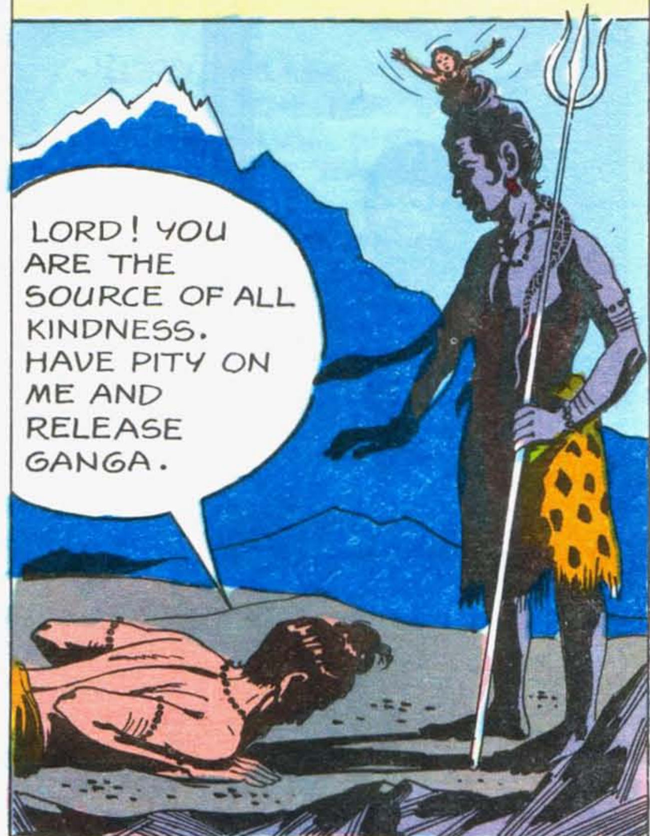

I WILL DO THAT FOR YOU.
BUT I MUST BE ON MY GUARD. GANGA'S MOVEMENTS ARE UNPREDICT-ABLE.

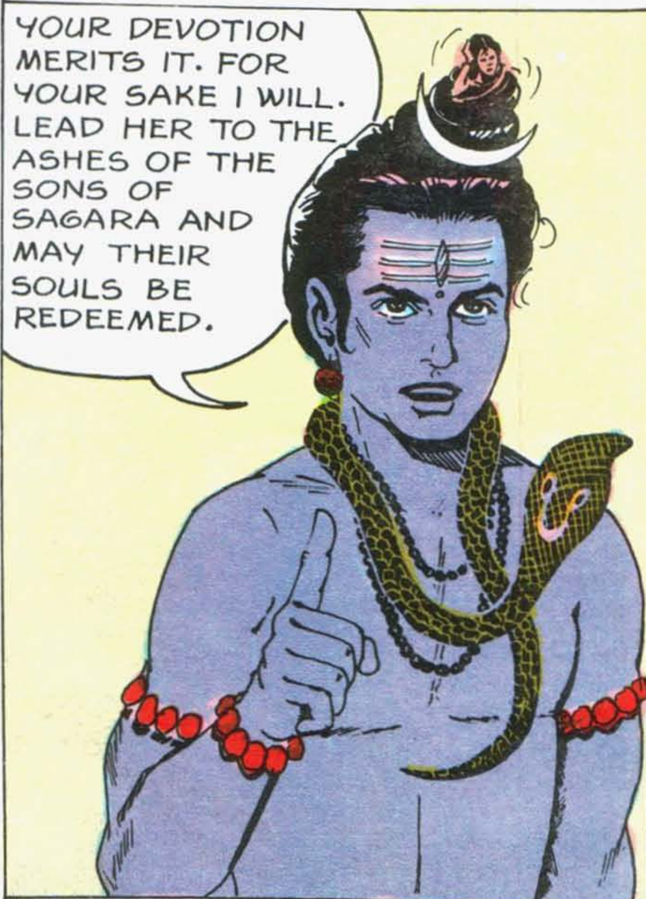

YOU WILL HAVE TO TAKE CARE WHILE CONDUCTING GANGA ON EARTH. SHE IS ACCUSTOMED TO FLOWING ANYWHERE AT WILL.
I WILL TAKE CARE, MY LORD.


IN HEAVEN, GANGA MADE READY TO DESCEND.


HALFWAY DOWN, A THOUGHT SUDDENLY OCCURRED TO HER.
THE MIGHTY ONE IS OFF HIS GUARD. I SHALL SWEEP HIM AWAY WITH ME TO THE NETHER WORLD.
SO THAT IS WHAT SHE PLANS TO DO. HM-M-M.

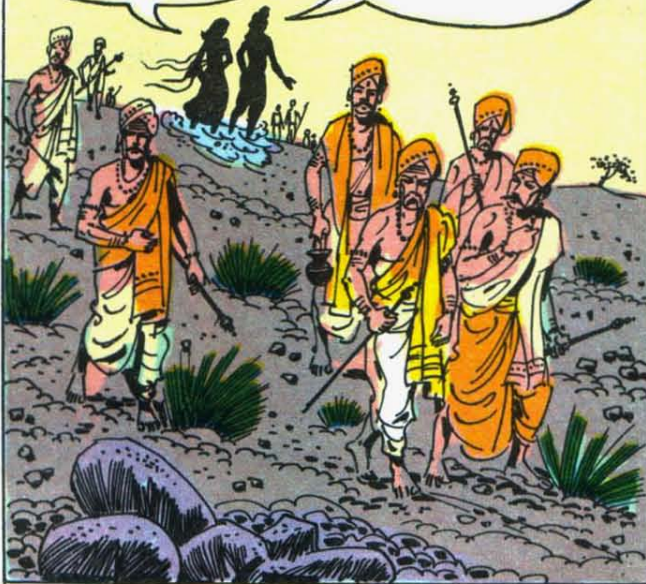

AS GANGA FELL, SHIVA IMPRIS-ONED HER IN HIS MATTED LOCKS. SHE SWIRLED ABOUT IN HER PRISON FOR MANY A YEAR, UNABLE TO ESCAPE.


BHAGIRATHA ONCE AGAIN ADORED SHIVA AND THE MIGHTY GOD APPEARED BEFORE HIM.
LORD! YOU ARE THE SOURCE OF ALL KINDNESS. HAVE PITY ON ME AND RELEASE GANGA.

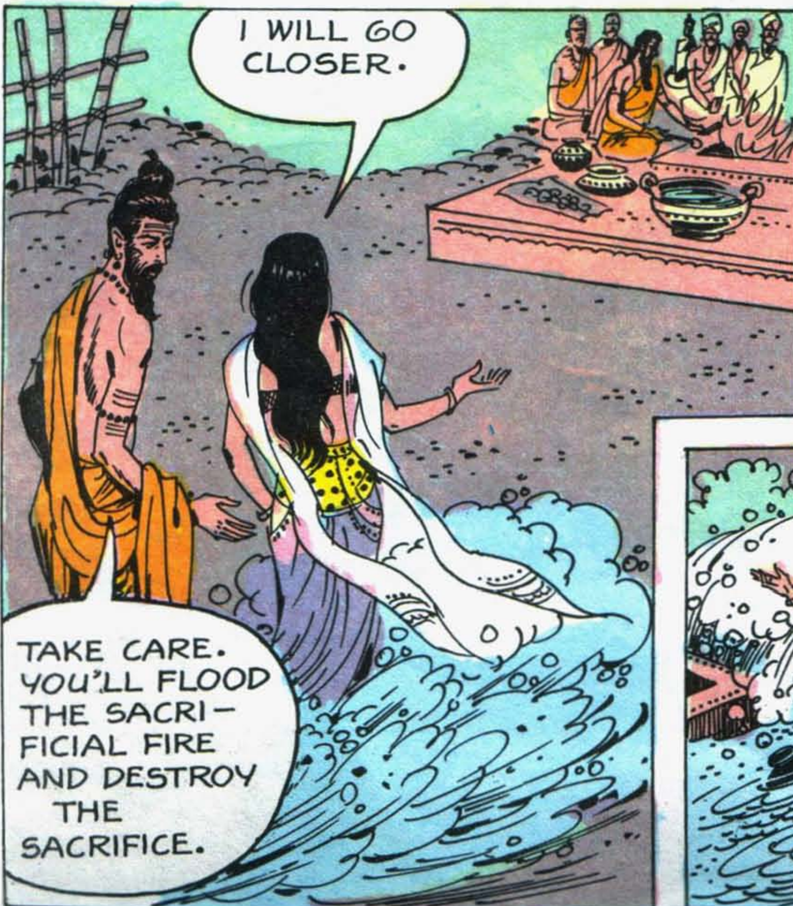

YOUR DEVOTION MERITS IT. FOR YOUR SAKE I WILL. LEAD HER TO THE ASHES OF THE SONS OF SAGARA AND MAY THEIR SOULS BE REDEEMED.



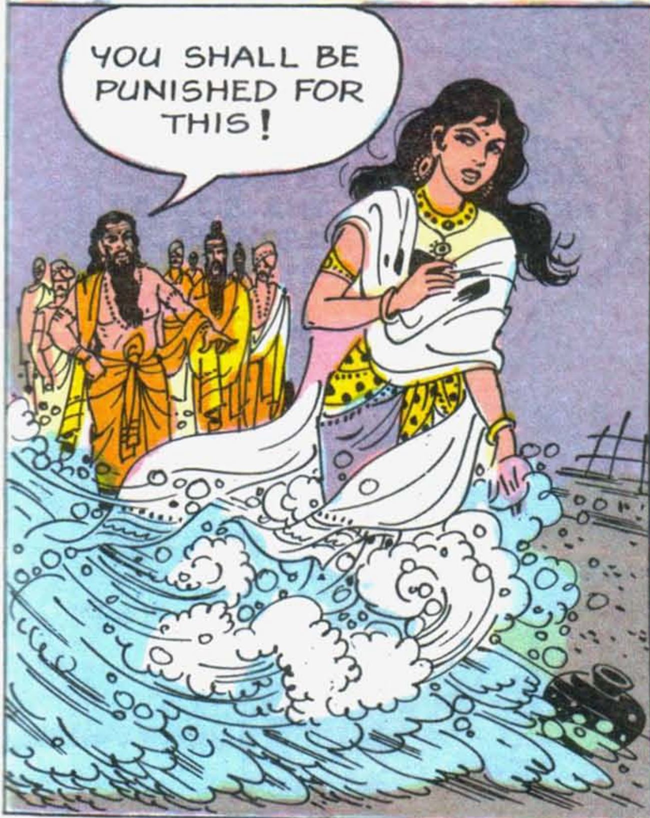

GANGA BECAME FURTHER PURIFIED BY HER CONTACT WITH THE LORD'S HEAD. PEOPLE RAN TO HER TO CLEANSE THEMSELVES OF ALL SINS.
MOTHER GANGA WILL WASH AWAY OUR SINS.
SHE HAS BEEN SANCTIFIED BY THE LORD'S SACRED HEAD.


BUT BHAGIRATHA'S TRIALS WERE NOT YET OVER. THE NETHER WORLD BEYOND THE OCEAN WAS STILL FAR AWAY. ON THE WAY—
WHERE ARE THESE PEOPLE GOING?
TO THE SACRIFICE OF SAGE JAHNU.


I WILL FLOW THAT WAY.
YOU MAY. BUT DO NOT DISTURB THE SAGE.


I WILL GO CLOSER.
TAKE CARE. YOU'LL FLOOD THE SACRI-FICIAL FIRE AND DESTROY THE SACRIFICE.

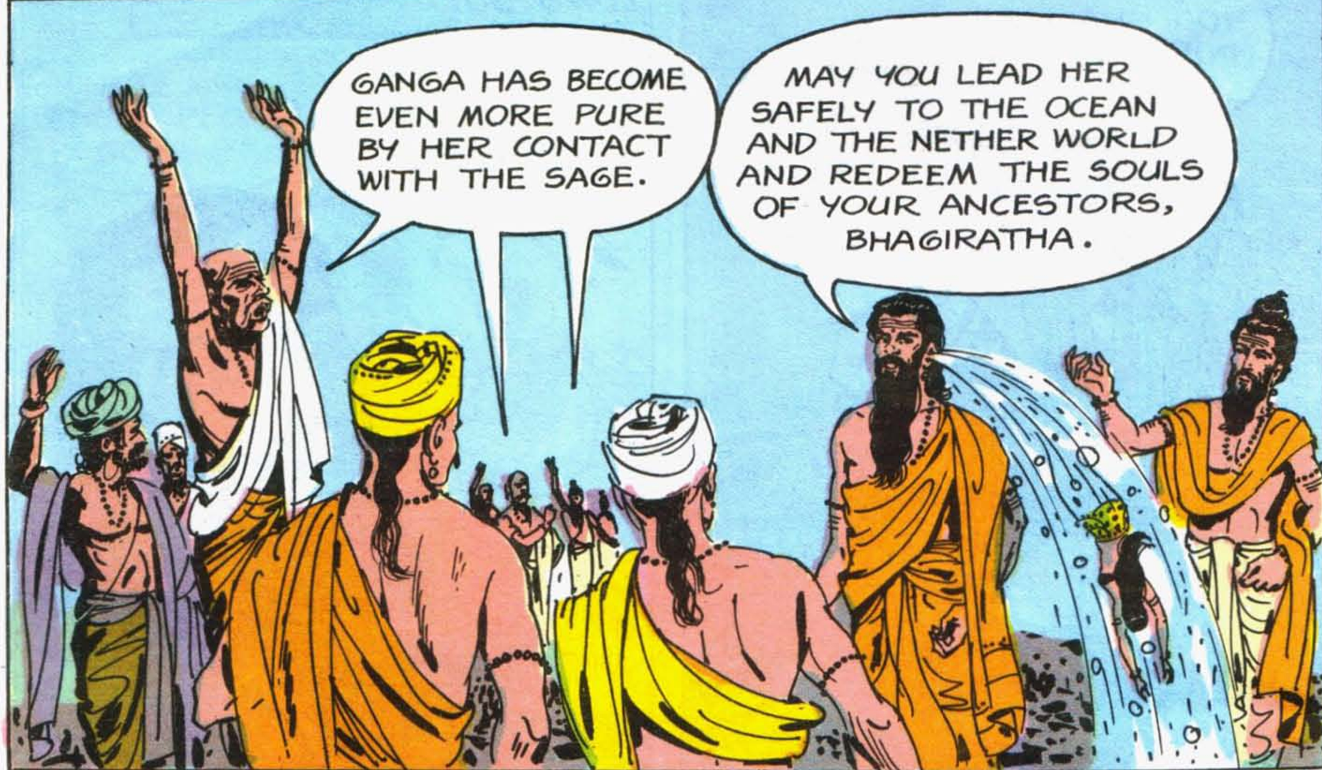

BUT THE IRREPRESSIBLE GANGA RUSHED FORWARD.

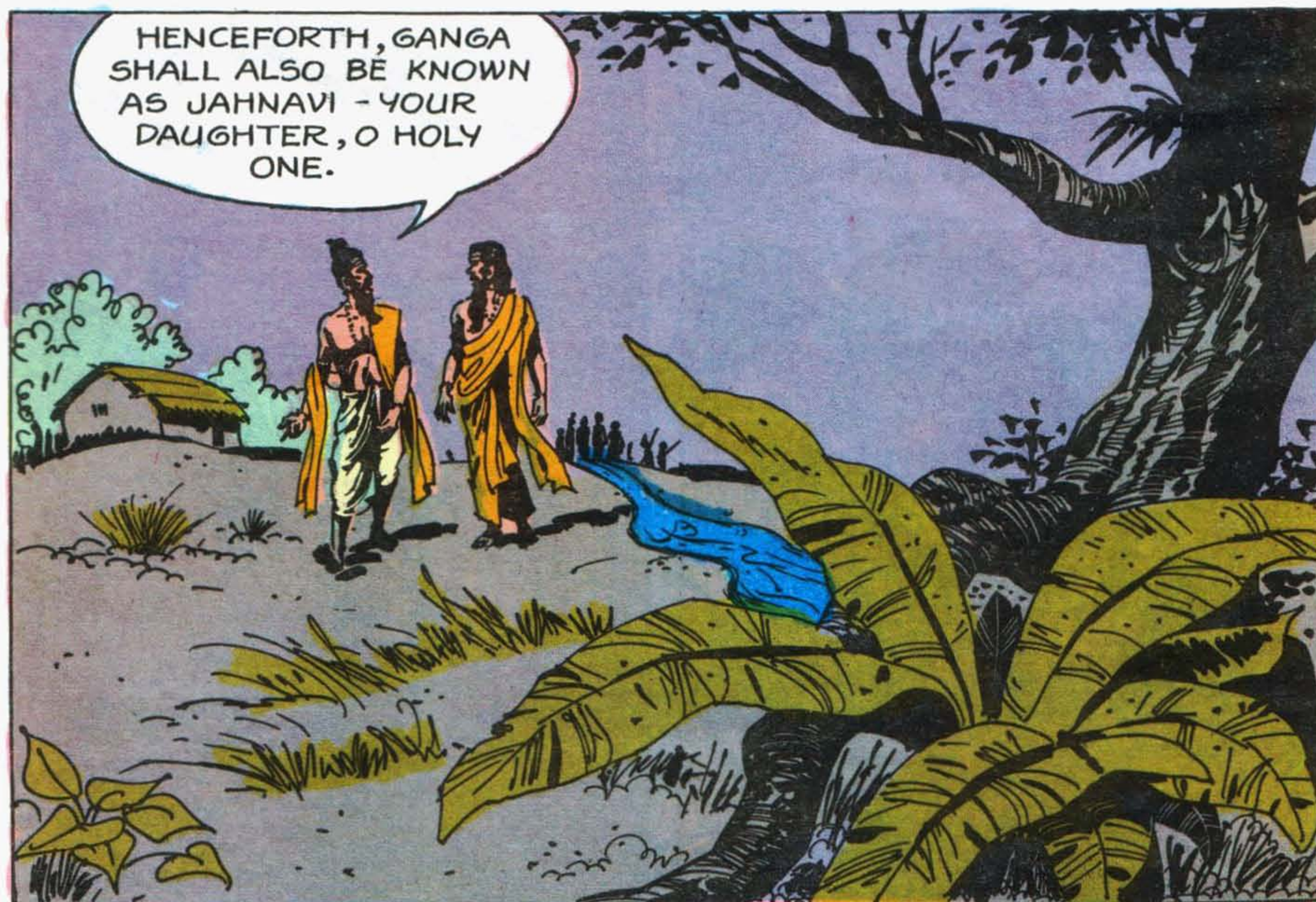

THE SAGE WAS FURIOUS.
YOU SHALL BE PUNISHED FOR THIS!


AND THE FUMING SAGE CONSUMED HER IN ONE LONG GULP.


FORGIVE HER, HOLY ONE, AND RELEASE HER.


YES, O HOLY ONE. LET NOT THE ENDEAVOURS OF BHAGIRATHA BE WASTED.


OUT OF RESPECT FOR BHAGIRATHA'S PENANCES, JAHNU RELEASED GANGA.
GANGA HAS BECOME EVEN MORE PURE BY HER CONTACT WITH THE SAGE.
MAY YOU LEAD HER SAFELY TO THE OCEAN AND THE NETHER WORLD AND REDEEM THE SOULS OF YOUR ANCESTORS, BHAGIRATHA.

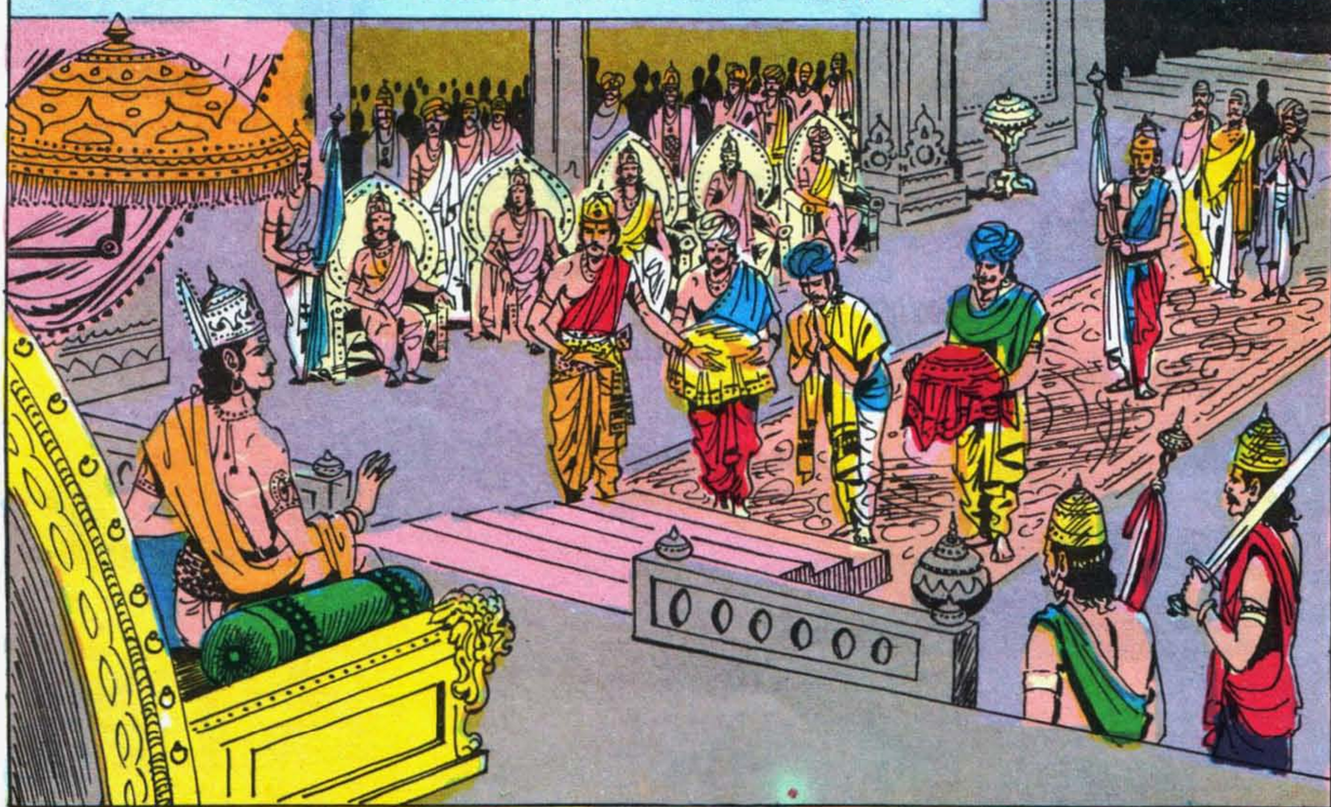

HENCEFORTH, GANGA SHALL ALSO BE KNOWN AS JAHNAVI - YOUR DAUGHTER, O HOLY ONE.

AT LAST, BHAGIRATHA AND GANGA REACHED THE OCEAN AND THE NETHER WORLD BEYOND. GANGA FLOWED OVER THE ASHES OF THE SONS OF SAGARA AND ONTO THE OCEAN BED. FROM THAT DAY ONWARDS, THE OCEAN CAME TO BE KNOWN AS "SAGARA."




HIS PROMISE FULFILLED, BRAHMA APPEARED BEFORE BHAGIRATHA.
THE SONS OF SAGARA ARE IN HEAVEN AND WILL REMAIN THERE AS LONG AS GANGA FLOWS ON THE EARTH.


SINCE YOU BROUGHT GANGA TO EARTH BY YOUR PENANCES, SHE SHALL BE KNOWN AS BHAGIRATHI - YOUR DAUGHTER.


THEN BHAGIRATHA RETURNED TO HIS KINGDOM, ASCENDED THE THRONE AND RULED WISELY FOR MANY YEARS.